

JUDAH HALEVI (before 1075-after 1141) was born in Muslim Tudela, on the borders of Christian Spain. At an early age he travelled to the centres of Jewish scholarship in Andalusia. In Granada, he formed a lasting friendship with Moses ibn Ezra which is recorded in a moving exchange of poems. Later, Halevi settled in Toledo, the capital of Castile under Alfonso VI, where he practised medicine, apparently in the service of the king. However, the murder in 1108 of his benefactor, Solomon ibn Ferrizuel, at the hands of Christian mercenaries, and the attacks upon the Jews in Toledo in the following year, prompted him to return to the Muslim area, where he made his home in Cordoba. His personal experiences in Christian and Muslim Spain during the Reconquest ('Between the armies of Seir and Kedar my army is lost . . . when they fight their wars, we fall in their downfall'), and his philosophical views concerning the meaning of diaspora and the path to redemption, culminated in his decision to emigrate to the Holy Land. Shortly before his departure he completed his influential treatise *The Book of Argument and Proof in Defence of the*

TABLE OF POEMS

Despised Faith. Translated from Arabic into Hebrew in the twelfth century, it came to be known as *The Book of the Kuzari* because it is composed as a dialogue between a Jewish scholar (the *haver*) and the king of the Khazars, who had converted to Judaism in the eighth century. In September 1140, after an arduous voyage, Halevi arrived in Alexandria and was received with great acclaim. He died six months later, after a period of intensive creativity. His poetic corpus of secular and sacred works consists of over a thousand compositions which attest to an unrivalled mastery of language and musical patterns and a profound lyrical expression of religious and national themes. His 'songs of Zion' are, perhaps, his most famous works. No Hebrew poet since the Psalmists had sung the praises of the Holy Land with such passion. The longing for Zion, the pain of parting from his cultural environment, the perilous sea voyage – all these topics were uncommon in the poetry of the time.

'Even since You were' מֵאִזְּמַעוֹן הָאֶהְרָה 333

This is the most extreme expression in Halevi's poetry of his view that the suffering of Israel is a sanctification of the name of God. In the *Kuzari* the *haver* maintains that Israel could have hastened the deliverance by submitting willingly to the yoke of exile.

'My love, have you forgotten' יְדִידִי, הֲשָׁכַחְתָּ חֲנוּחִי 334

'O sleeper, whose heart' יָשֵׁן – וְלִבּוֹ עֵר 334

The opening line of this *reshut* refers to Song of Songs 5.2 which was allegorically interpreted to mean that Israel 'slept' in the darkness of exile but its heart yearned to rejoin the Shekinah. The 'star' (line 3; Numbers 24.17) represents the Messiah. Various messianic movements were active in Halevi's time and he once dreamt that the redemption would come in 1130.

'The lovely doe' יַעֲלֵת חֵן, מִמְּעוֹנָה 335

An *ahava* which, like the previous poem, employs the phraseology of the Song of Songs. The 'lover' and 'gazelle' represent God.

'O you that sleep' יְשֻׁנָּה בְּחֵיק יְלָדוֹת 335

A *reshut* for *Nishmat*.

'Lord, all my longing' אֵלֹהֵי, נִגְדִיד כָּל תַּאֲוָתִי 336

A metrical *bakasha* ('supplication'), a type of personal *seliḥa* introduced by early Spanish *piyut*. Characteristically, its ending repeats its beginning.

'I am running towards' לְקִרְאָת מְקוֹר חַיִּי אֶמֶת 337

Takes, as its point of departure, Psalms 36.10: 'With You is the fountain of life; by Your light do we see light.'

TABLE OF POEMS

'Lord, where shall I find You?'	יה, אנה אמצאך	338
An <i>ofan</i> in the rhyme-form of a <i>muwashshah</i> , but written in the special syllabic metre which was exclusively used in Spain in strophic <i>piyutim</i> . In this case, there are twelve syllables to a line, divided into units of six and six by internal rhymes. It is based on Solomon's prayer (2 Chronicles 6.18), on a verse from the daily <i>Kedusha</i> ('Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place'), and on the Midrashic paradox: 'The Lord is the place of His world, but the world is not His place'; that is, the world is contained in Him, not He in the world.		
'Do these tears know'	הידעו הדמעות	339
An epitaph for the tombstone of an unidentified 'Rabbi Abraham'.		
'Alas, my daughter'	הה, בתי, השכחת	339
'On that day'	יום אכפי הכבדתי	340
This lament, in the <i>muwashshah</i> form, for the Ninth of Av elaborates on a Talmudic legend concerning the murder of the prophet Zechariah, who was stoned in the Temple-court by order of King Joash (2 Chronicles 24.21-22).		
'O graceful doe'	יצלת חן, רחמי ללב	342
Vulgar Arabic – and sometimes Romance – was generally employed in the final couplet (<i>kharja</i>) of the secular Hebrew <i>muwashshah</i> . The <i>kharja</i> was, in most cases, borrowed from popular Arabic or Romance songs.		
'My love washes'	עפרה חכבס	343
The Arabic superscription in the <i>diwan</i> reads: 'An improvisation composed upon passing by a river where washerwomen were laundering.'		
'Why, O fair one'	מה לך, צביה	343
Excerpts.		
'O my fair youth'	בי הצבי	344
Another <i>muwashshah</i> , in a characteristic popular vein.		
'Gently, my hard-hearted'	אט לי, חזק ללב	346
Opening section of the reply to a song of friendship (by Solomon ibn al-Muallim) which had greeted Halevi's move to Granada.		
'Why put your trust'	מה תאמין בזמן	346
'Th slaves of Time'	צבדי זמן	347
'My heart is in the East'	לבי במזרח	347

TABLE OF POEMS

Zion was 'in the domain of Edom' (line 4) after the conquest of Jerusalem by the Crusaders in 1099.

'O Zion, will you not ask' צִיּוֹן, הֲלֹא תִשְׁאַלִי 347

Excerpts from the most famous of Halevi's Zion poems. Though not intended for the liturgy, it was soon included in the laments for the Ninth of Av and gave rise to scores of imitations ('Zionides'), many of which entered the Ashkenazi rite. The sixteenth-century legend, that Halevi was trampled to death by an Arab horseman as he was reciting this poem at the gates of Jerusalem, is widely known from Heine's portrayal in *Hebrew Melodies* (1851). The gates of Zion 'face the gates of heaven' (line 12) because, according to rabbinic belief, there was a celestial Temple corresponding to, and exactly opposite, the earthly one.

'Let not your heart tremble' וְאַל יִמּוֹט בְּלִבְ יָמִים 349

From a poem in which he exhorts himself to set forth on the voyage to Zion. The description of the storm at sea partly echoes Psalm 107.23-32.

'This wind of yours' זֶה רוּחְךָ, צֵד מְעַרְב 350

The western wind brings him closer to his destination. This, and the following poems, were written during the long sea journey.

'Greetings to the kinsfolk' קְרְאוּ עָלַי בָּנוֹת 351

'Has a flood come' הֲבֵא מַבּוּל 352

יהודה הלוי

Judah Halevi

מֵאֵז מֵעוֹן הָאֱהָבָה

THE HOME OF LOVE

מֵאֵז מֵעוֹן הָאֱהָבָה הִיִּיתָ —
חֲנוּ אֶהְבִּי בְּאִשְׁרֵי חֲנוּיָתָ.
תּוֹכְחוֹת מְרִיבֵי עָרְבוּ לִי עַל שְׂמֶךְ;
עֲזָבָם — יַעֲנֶנּוּ אֶת אֲשֶׁר עֲנִיתָ.
לְמַדּוֹ תְּרוֹנָה אוֹיְבֵי — וְאֶהְבֶּם,
כִּי יִדְפוּ חֵלֶל אֲשֶׁר הִפִּיתָ.

Ever since You were the home of love
for me, my love has lived where You
have lived. Because of You, I have
delighted in the wrath of my enemies;
let them be, let them torment the one
whom You tormented. It was from You
that they learned their wrath, and I
love them, for they hound the wounded
one whom You struck down. Ever

מיום בזיתיני בזיתיני אני,
כי לא אכבד את אשר בזיתי.
עד יעבר-ועם, ותשלח עוד פדות
אל גחלתך זאת אשר פדיתי.

since You despised me, I have despised
myself, for I will not honour what You
despise. So be it, until Your anger has
passed, and again You will redeem
Your own possession, which You once
redeemed.¹

ידידי, השבחה

ZION COMPLAINS TO GOD

ידידי, השבחה חנוכה בבין שדי –
ולמה מכרתני צמיתות למעבדי?
הלא אז בארץ לא זרועה רדפתיך?
ושעיר וחר פארן וסיני וסין עדי!
והיו לך דודי, והיה רצונך בי –
ואיך תחלק עתה כבודי לבלעדי?
רחוקה אלי שעיר, הדופה עדי קדר,
בחונה בכור יון, מענה בעל מדי:
היש בלחך גואל, ובלתי – אסיר-תקנה?
תנה עזך לי, כי לך אתנה דודי!

My love, have you forgotten how you
lay between my breasts? Then why
have you sold me forever to my
enslavers? Did I not follow you²
through a barren land? Let Mount
Seir and Mount Paran, Sinai and Sin
be my witnesses! There my love was
yours, and I was your delight. Then
how can you now bestow my glory
upon others? I am thrust into Seir,³
driven towards Kedar,⁴ tested in the
furnace of Greece, crushed under the
yoke of Media. Is there any saviour but
you? any prisoner of hope but I? Give
me your strength, for I shall give you
my love!

ישן – ולבו ער

TO ISRAEL, IN EXILE

ישן – ולבו ער, בוער ומשפער –
צא גא והנער ולכה באור פני.
קומה, צלח ורכב! דרך לך פוכב,
ואשר בבור שוב עליה לראש סיני.
אל תעלו גפשים, האומרים 'תאשם

O sleeper, whose heart is awake,
burning and raging, now wake and go
forth, and walk in the light of My
presence. Rise, and ride on! A star has
come forth for you, and he who has
lain in the pit will go up to the top of
Sinai. Let them not exult, those who

1. From the bondage of Egypt.

2. After the exodus from Egypt.

3. The Christian nations.

4. The Muslim nations.

ציון! והנה שם לבי ושם עיני.
אגל ואסתר, אקצף ואצטר –
מי יחמל יותר מני עלי בני?

say, 'Zion is desolate!' – for My heart
is in Zion and My eyes are there. I
reveal Myself and I conceal Myself,
now I rage, now I consent – but who
has more compassion than I have for
My children?

יעלת חן

TO THE RIVALS

יעלת חן, ממעונה רחקה,
אוהבה פועם – ולמה צחקקה?
צחקקה על בת אדום ובנות ערב
המבקשות לחשק דוד חשקה.
הן פראים הם – ואיך ידמו אלי
יעלה על הצבי התרפקה?
אי גבואה, אי מנורה, אי ארון
הברית, אי השכינה דבקה?
אל, משנאי, אל תכבו אהבה,
כי תכבוה – והיא אש נשקה!

The lovely doe, far from her home,
whose lover is angry – why did she
laugh? She laughed at the daughter of
Edom and the daughter of Arabia who
covet her beloved. Why, they are
nothing but wild asses, and how can
they compare to the doe who nestled
against her gazelle? Where is the spirit
of prophecy found, where the lamp-
stand, the Ark of the Covenant, the
ever-present Shekinah? No, my rivals,
do not try to quench love, for if you do,
it will blaze up like fire!

ישנה בחיק ילדות

TO THE SOUL

ישנה בחיק ילדות, למתי תשקבי?
דעי כי געורים בנערת ננערו.
הלעד ימי השחרות? קומי צאי,
ראי מלאכי שיבה במוסר שחרו.
והתנערי מן הזמן, בצפירים
אשר מרסיסי לילה יתנערו.
דאי בדרור למצא דרור ממעלך
ומתולדות ימים ביימים יסערו.
היי אחרי מלכך מרדפת, בסוד
נשמות אשר אל טוב יי נהרו.

Oh, you that sleep in the bosom of
childhood, how long will you rest there?
Know that youth is shaken off like
straw! Do you think boyhood lasts for
ever? Get up, go out and see the grey
heralds, who have come to rebuke you.
Shake off Time as birds shake off the
dew-drops of the night. Soar like a
swallow to find freedom from your sins
and from the vagaries of Fortune, that
rage like a sea. Pursue your King, at
one with the souls who flock towards
the bounty of God.

אֱלֹהֵי, נִגְדֶּךָ כָּל תַּאֲוָתִי

FOR THE DAY OF
ATONEMENT

אֱלֹהֵי, נִגְדֶּךָ כָּל תַּאֲוָתִי,
וְאִם לֹא אֶעֱלֶה עַל שִׁפְתִּי.
רְצוֹנְךָ אֲשַׁלֶּה רָנַע – וְאֶגֹּעַ,
וְיָמִי יִתֵּן וְתִבּוֹא שְׂאֵלָתִי,
וְאֶפְקִיד אֶת שְׁאֵר רוּחִי בְּיָדְךָ,
וְיִשְׁנֹתִי, וְעָרְכָה לִי שְׁנָתִי!
בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ מִמָּוֶת – מוֹתִי בְּחַיִּי,
וְאִם אֶדְבֵּק בְּךָ – חַיִּי בְּמוֹתִי.
אֲכַל לֹא אֶדְעָה בְּמָה אֶקְדֵּם,
וְיִמָּה תִּהְיֶה עֲבוֹדָתִי וְדָתִי.

Lord, all my longing is before You,
even though it does not pass my lips.
Grant me Your favour for even a
moment, and I will die. If only You
would grant my wish! I will commit
my spirit into Your keeping, I will
sleep, and my sleep will be pleasant.
When I am far from You my life is
death; but if I cling to You, my death
is life. But I do not know what to offer
You, what my service and my worship
should be.

דַּרְכֶּיךָ, אֱלֹהֵי, לִמְדֵנִי,
וְשׁוּב מִמַּאֲסֵר סְכָלוֹת שְׁבוּתִי.
וְהוֹרֵנִי בְּעוֹד יֵשׁ בִּי יִכְלֹת
לְהִתְעַנּוֹת, וְאֵל תִּבְּרָה עֲנוּתִי,
בְּטָרֶם יוֹם אֶהְיֶה עָלֶי לְמִשְׁאָה,
וְיוֹם יִכְבֹּד קִצְתִּי עַל קִצְתִּי,
וְאֶבְנֶה בְּעַל-בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ, וְיִאֲכַל
עֲצָמֵי עֶשׂ וְנִלְאוּ מִשְׁאֵתִי,
וְאֶסַּע אֶל מְקוֹם גָּסְעוֹ אֲבוֹתִי
וּבְמִקְוֵם תַּחֲנוּתָם תַּחֲנוּתִי.
כִּגְר תּוֹשֵׁב אֲנִי עַל גִּבְּ אֶדְמָה,
וְאוֹלָם בִּי בְּבִטְנָה גִּחְלָתִי.

Show me Your ways, O Lord, restore
me from the bondage of folly. Teach
me while I still have the strength to
endure – do not scorn my plight! –
before I become a burden to myself and
my limbs weigh heavy on each other;
before I yield unwillingly, and my
bones wither and are unable to bear
me; before I journey to where my
fathers have gone, and come to rest
where they are resting. I am like a
stranger upon the earth, but my true
home is in her womb.

נְעוּרֵי עַד הָלַם עָשׂוּ לְנַפְשָׁם,
וּמָתִי גַם אֲנִי אֶעֱשֶׂה לְבֵיתִי?
וְהָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר גָּתַן בְּלִבִּי
מִנְעֵנִי לְבַקֵּשׁ אַחֲרֵיתִי.

My youth has thus far had its pleasure,
but when shall I, too, provide for my
household? The world and its delights,
which He put in my heart, have kept

ואיכה אעבד יוצרי — בעודי
 אסיר יצרי ועבד תאוותי?
 ואיכה מעלה רמה אבקש —
 ומחר תהיה רמה אחותי?
 ואיך ייטב ביום טובה לבבי,
 ולא אדע — הייטב מחרתתי?
 והימים והלילות ערבים
 לבלות את שארי צד בלותי,
 ולרוח יזרון מחציתי,
 ולעפר ישיבון מחציתי.

ומה אמר — ויצרי ירדפני
 באויב מנעורי עד בלותי?
 ומה לי בזמן — אם לא רצונך?
 ואם אינך מנתי — מה מנתי?
 אני ממעשים שולל ועלם,
 וצדקתך לבדה היא כסותי.
 ועוד מה אאריך לשון ואשאל?
 אדני, נגדך כל תאוותי!

לקראת מקור חיי אמת

לקראת מקור חיי אמת ארוצה —
 על פן בחיי שוא וריק אקווצה.
 לראות פני מלכי מגמתי לבד,
 לא אערץ בלתו ולא אעריצה.
 מי יתנני לחזותו בחלום!
 אישן שנת עולם ולא אקיצה.
 לו אחקזה פניו בלבי ביתה,
 לא שאלו עיני להביט חוצה.

me from seeking my aim. And how can I worship my Maker while I am still captive to my lust, slave to my desire? How can I aspire to a high rank, when tomorrow the worm will be my sister? How can I be cheerful on a happy day, when I do not know if there will be happiness tomorrow? The days and nights have pledged to consume my flesh, to scatter half of me to the winds and return the other half to the dust.

What more can I say? My passions hound me like an enemy from youth to withered old age. Does Time hold anything for me except Your favour? And if You are not my lot, what other lot do I have? I am stripped naked, devoid of good works, and only Your righteousness is my covering. Then why do I go on wagging my tongue and pleading? O Lord, all my longing is before You!

THE TRUE VISION

I am running towards the fountain of true life; therefore, I spurn the life of lies and trifles. To look at the face of my King — that is my only wish. None but Him do I fear and venerate. If only I could see Him in a dream! Oh, I would sleep forever and never wake up. If I could see His face inside my heart, my eyes would no more wish to look outside.

יְהוָה, אֵיךְ אֶמְצְאָךְ ?

LORD, WHERE SHALL I
FIND YOU?

יְהוָה, אֵיךְ אֶמְצְאָךְ ? מְקוֹמְךָ נִעְלָה וְנִסְתָּר !
וְאֵיךְ לֹא אֶמְצְאָךְ ? כְּבוֹדְךָ מְלֵא עוֹלָם !

Lord, where shall I find You? Your place is lofty and secret. And where shall I not find you? The whole earth is full of Your glory!

הִנֵּמְצָא בְּקִרְבִּים, אֶפְסִי אֶרֶץ הַקִּים.
הִמְשָׁגְבִי לְקִרְוִים, הִמְבָּטַח לְרַחוּקִים.
אִתָּה יוֹשֵׁב כְּרוּבִים, אִתָּה שׁוֹכֵן שְׁחָקִים.
תִּתְהַלֵּל בְּצַבְאָךְ — וְאַתָּה עַל רֹאשׁ מַהֲלָלִים.
גִּלְגַּל לֹא יִשָּׂא — אֵיךְ כִּי חֲדָרֵי אוֹלָם !

You are found in man's innermost heart, yet You fixed earth's boundaries. You are a strong tower for those who are near, and the trust of those who are far. You are enthroned on the cherubim,¹ yet You dwell in the heights of heaven. You are praised by Your hosts, but even their praise is not worthy of You. The sphere of heaven cannot contain You; how much less the chambers of the Temple!

וּבְהִנָּשְׂאָךְ עֲלִיָּהֶם עַל כֵּס נִשְׂא נִרְם,
אִתָּה קְרוֹב אֲלֵיָּהֶם מְרוֹחֶם וּמִבְשָׁרָם.
פִּיהֶם יַעֲיֵד בָּהֶם, כִּי אֵין בָּלְתָךְ יוֹצֵרָם.
מִי זֶה לֹא יִירָא — וְעַל מַלְכוּתְךָ עֲלֵם ?
אוֹ מִי לֹא יִקְרָא — וְאַתָּה נוֹתֵן אֲכָלָם ?

Even when You rise above Your hosts on a throne, high and exalted, You are nearer to them than their own bodies and souls. Their mouths attest that they have no Maker except You. Who shall not fear You? All bear the yoke of Your kingdom. And who shall not call to You? It is You who give them their food.

דָּרַשְׁתִּי קִרְבְּךָ, בְּכָל לִבִּי קִרְאִיתִי,
וּבְצִאֲתִי לְקִרְאָתְךָ — לְקִרְאֲתִי מִצִּיאֲתִי,
וּבְפִלְאֵי גְבוּרָתְךָ בְּקִדְשׁ חַיִּיתִי.
מִי יֹאמַר לֹא יִרָא ? הֵן שָׁמַיִם וְחַיִּלָם
יִגִּידוּ מוֹרָאךָ בְּלִי נִשְׁמָע קוֹלָם !

I have sought to come near You, I have called to You with all my heart; and when I went out towards You, I found You coming towards me. I look upon Your wondrous power with awe. Who can say that he has not seen You? The heavens and their legions proclaim Your dread — without a sound.

1. Above the Ark.

האֵמֶנּוּ כִּי יֵשֶׁב אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם?
 וַיֵּמָּה יִחְשַׁב כָּל חֹשֶׁב, אֲשֶׁר בָּעֶפֶר יִסּוּדֵם —
 וְאַתָּה, קָדוֹשׁ, יוֹשֵׁב תְּהִלּוֹתֶם וּכְבוֹדֶם!
 חַיּוֹת יוֹדוּ פִּלְאָךְ, הַעוֹמְדוֹת בְּרוֹם עוֹלָם.
 עַל רְאִשֵׁיהֶם בָּסְאָךְ — וְאַתָּה נוֹשֵׂא כָלֶם

But can God really dwell among men?
 Their foundations are dust — what can
 they conceive of Him? Yet You, O
 Holy One, make Your home where
 they sing Your praises and Your glory.
 The living creatures, standing on the
 summit of the world, praise Your
 wonders. Your throne is above their
 heads, yet it is You who carry them all!

הַיָּדְעוּ הַדִּמְעוֹת

TOMBSTONE INSCRIPTION

הַיָּדְעוּ הַדִּמְעוֹת מִי שָׁפְכָם,
 וַיָּדְעוּ הַלֵּבָבוֹת מִי הִפְכָם?
 הִפְכָם בּוֹא מְאוֹרָם תּוֹךְ רִגְבִּים,
 וְלֹא יָדְעוּ רִגְבִּים מַה בְּתוֹכָם.
 בְּתוֹכָם שָׁר וְגִדּוֹל, תָּם וְיָשָׁר,
 יֵרָא הָאֵל וְאִישׁ גָּבוֹחַ וְחָכָם.

Do these tears know who made them
 fall? Do these hearts know who made
 them recoil? Oh, they recoiled because
 their sun sank into the dust, and the
 dust does not know what it holds. It
 holds a princely man, blameless and
 upright, a God-fearing man, discreet
 and wise.

הֵהָ, בְּתִי

A MOTHER'S LAMENT

'הֵהָ, בְּתִי, הִשְׁכַּחְתְּ מִשְׁבְּגָךְ?
 כִּי לִשְׁאוֹל גָּסְעוּ נוֹשְׂאֵי אֲרוֹנְךָ,
 וְאֵין חֵלְקִי מִמֶּךָ רַק זְכָרוֹנְךָ.
 וְאַחֲוִינִי אֶת עֲפָרוֹת צִיּוֹנְךָ
 עֵת אֲסוּר לִשְׁאֹל שְׁלוֹמְךָ — וְאֵינִי:
 כִּי הַמָּוֶת יִפְרִיד בֵּינִי וּבֵינִיךָ.

'Alas, my daughter, have you forgotten
 your home? The coffin bearers have
 taken you to the grave, and I have
 nothing left of you but your memory.
 When I come to greet you, and do not
 find you, I take pity on the dust of your
 tomb; for death has parted us.

בֵּת מוֹצֵאת מִחֶדֶר הוֹרְתָה —
 אֵיךְ אֶחָיָה וּמִנְפָּשִׁי גִזְרְתָה?
 צוּר אֲבִקַּע עֵת אֶרְאֶה צוּרְתָה.
 אֵיךְ תִּשְׁגָּה לְבָנָה מִהַדְרְתָה!

'O the daughter is taken from her
 mother's room! How can I live? Her
 limbs were part of me. My tears cleave
 rocks when I remember her. How the
 lustre of the moon has been tarnished!

שם בשאול אראה את חתומה,
 איך תשים גוש עפר חפמה,
 איך מתקו לה רגבי קבורמה.
 מר לי מר, בתי, על חסרונך:
 כי המות יפריד ביני וביגך. [...]

There, in the grave, I see her being
 wed: clods of earth are her canopy, and
 the dust of the pit is sweet to her. O my
 daughter, your loss is bitter to me; for
 death has parted us.

הה, בתי, הכרע הכרעתני!
 'אוי, אמי, אוי לי כי ילדתני.
 אך היום איך מאוס מאסתני?
 כי לבכור מות גדלתני.
 בהגיע תור, לנפשי שלחתני,
 ובצטרת עפר עשרתני,
 ובחפת אברון הושבתני.
 בצל-ברחה, אמי, לא ברצונך:
 כי המות יפריד ביני וביגך. [...]

'Alas, my daughter, what sorrow you
 have brought me!' 'Alas, alas, my
 mother, that you ever gave me birth.
 How, on this day, how could you cast
 me off? Oh, you brought me up to be
 Death's bride! When my turn came,
 you sent me away alone; you crowned
 me with a garland of dust; you set me
 down in the bridal-bower of destruc-
 tion. O my mother, it was against your
 will, it was not of your doing, for death
 has parted us.'

יום אכפי הכבדתי

יום אכפי הכבדתי ויכפלו עוונתי,
 בשלחי יד בדם גביא בחצר מקדש אלגני.
 ולא כסתהו אדמה עד בוא חרב מוני,
 ולא שקט עדי העם ועד הפליא פליליה —
 ניירב בבת יהודה מאניה ואניה.

THE MURDER OF ZECHARIAH

On that day I made my burden heavier
 and multiplied my crimes when I shed
 the prophet's blood in the court of the
 Lord's temple. The earth would not
 cover it until my enemies¹ came with
 the sword; it would not rest until it was
 avenged, wreaking terrible judgements.
 Oh, He brought sorrow upon sorrow to
 the daughter of Judah.

היה הולך וסוער עד בוא רב טבחים,
 ובא אל מקדש אלגני וראה דמים רווחים.
 וישאל בעבור זאת לפהגים הוובחים,

The blood grew more and more
 tempestuous until Nebuzaradan, the
 commander of the guard, arrived. When
 he entered the Lord's temple, he
 discovered the seething blood. He
 asked the priests who were offering

1. The Babylonian armies, under the command of Nebuzaradan (2 Kings 25.8).

ויענוהו: 'אין זה כי אם דם הזבחים.'

גם הוא זבח לחקר מה זה ועל מה היה
ואמר לגפשי: זאת חשאתך וזה פריה!

sacrifices, what it signified; and they replied: 'It is nothing but the blood of the sacrifices.' Then he, too, slaughtered a beast to see if this was so and how it came about; and I said to myself: 'This is your sin, and this is its fruit.'

ובכל זאת לא שקט ועודו בים נגרש.

ויבקש הדבר וימצא מפרש,

כי דם איש האלהים על לא חמס שרש.

ויאמר נבוזראדן: 'וגם דמו הנה נדרש!

אספו לי הלהנים והוציאו מביית יי,

ולא אשקט עד ישקט דם הנביא זכריה!

Still, the blood would not rest; it surged like the sea. Then, after questioning, the truth came to light: this was the blood of the man of God, cut down though he had done no wrong. Nebuzaradan said: 'The time has come to pay for his blood. Gather all the priests, take them out of the house of God. I shall not rest until the blood of the prophet Zechariah finds rest.'

דקר ישישים למאות ובחורים לרבואות,

ויורד לשבח פהגי אלגי צבאות,

וחינוקות של בית רב, ועיגי אבות רואות.

ואין שקט לדם נביא, ויהי למופת ולאות!

וחרב צר נוקמת והקרזה הומיה —

בכל זאת לא שב אפו ועוד ידו נטויה.

He murdered old men by the hundreds, and young men by the tens of thousands. He slaughtered the priests of the Lord of hosts, and school-children before the very eyes of their fathers. Still the blood of the prophet would not rest. This was a sign and a portent. The enemy's sword wreaked vengeance, the city was filled with uproar — yet His anger was not turned back and His hand was stretched out still!

הוסיף להרג נשים עם יונקי שדים,

ודם עולה ביניהם בים ויאור מצרים,

עדי נשא נבוזראדן עיניו לשמים

ויאמר: 'האין בי לדם בבנות ירושלים?

הכלה אתה עושה את שארית השבקה

ואז שקט דם גקי, וחרב גקם רגיה.

Then he killed women as well as babes at the breast, and the blood rose among them like a sea, like the river of Egypt, until Nebuzaradan raised his eyes to heaven and said: 'Will this blood not be content with the blood of Jerusalem's daughters? Are You going to wipe out the remnant of Israel?' Only then did the innocent blood come to rest; the sword of vengeance had drunk its fill.

יַעֲלֶת־חֵן, רַחֲמֵי לֵבָב

THE SENSITIVE DOE

יַעֲלֶת חֵן, רַחֲמֵי לֵבָב שְׂכַנְתִּיו מְעוֹדָה.
תִּדְעִי כִּי יוֹם תִּנּוּדִי – אֲסוּגִי בְּגוֹדָה.
גַּם בָּעֵת יִהְרָסוּ עֵינַי לְהַבִּיט אֶל הוֹדָה,
מִלְחֲזֵיךְ פָּגְעוּ בִּי נְחָשִׁים יִפְרִישׁוּ,
כִּי תִמְתָּם בָּאֵשׁ יַחְתּוּ, וְאוֹתִי יִגְלִשׁוּ.

O graceful doe, pity this heart in which
you have dwelled all your life. Know
that the day you leave me, your going
will be my ruin. And even now, when
my eyes dare to glance at your splen-
dour, I am stung by the serpents that
guard your cheeks, for their poison
burns like fire and they drive me out.

שָׁלְלָה לִבִּי בִרְדִים עָלֵי לֵב מְנַחִים:
לֵב כִּמּוֹ אֶבֶן וְרַק יִגְמַל שְׁגִי תַפּוּחִים!
נָצְבוּ וַיִּהְיוּ לְשֹׁמְאֵל וַיִּמִּין בְּרַמְחִים.
מוֹקְדֵיהֶם הֵם בְּלִבִּי – וְהֵם לֹא נִגְשׁוּ,
גַּם בְּפִיהֶם דָּמִי שָׁתוּ – וְלֹא הִתְבּוֹשְׁשׁוּ!

She ensnared my heart with the breasts
that lie upon her heart – a heart of
stone, and yet it put forth two apples!
They stand guard, to the left and to the
right, like lances. Their fiery [nipples
burn] in my heart, though they have
never come near me. Their mouths
have drunk my blood, they felt no
shame at all!

יַעֲלֶה חֲזָקִי דַת הָאֵל בְּעֵינֶיהָ תִּפְרֶה,
כִּי תִמְיַחֲנִי בְּצַדִּיהָ אֶבֶל אֵין לִי כִפֹּר.
הִרְאִיתָם עוֹד לֵב אֲרִיָּה וְעַפְעָפִי עֶפֶר?
לִמְדוֹ לִטְרֹף בְּלִבִּיא, וְחֲצִים יִלְטִשׁוּ,
דָּם לִבִּי יִמְצוּ יִשְׁתּוּ, וְנִפְשִׁי בִקְשׁוּ.

This doe violates the laws of God with
her eyes: she kills me with malice
aforethought, yet no one avenges me.
Have you ever seen the heart of a lion
joined to the eyelids of a gazelle? Her
eyelids have learned to tear like a lion,
they hurl sharpened arrows at me, they
drain my heart's blood to the dregs.
They are out for my life.

יוֹם אָנִי מַיִין דּוֹדִיָּה בְּשִׁכּוֹר מִתְרוֹגֵן,
כִּי שְׁלוֹמִיָּה תִפְגִּיעַ וְעָלִי תִתְלַוֵּן
עַל יְדֵי צִירִים; וּבְבוֹאָם, אֲלִיהֶם תִּתְתַּנֵּן:
'מִלֵּאכֵי שְׁלוֹם, פָּגְעוּ בִּי, שָׁנוּ גַם שִׁלְשׁוּ!
מֵאֲמָרָם לִבִּי פָתוּ וְרוּחִי תִחַדְשׁוּ.

One day, when I was reeling like a
drunkard, longing for the wine of her
love, she dispatched envoys to me
bearing greetings and complaints; and
when they returned to her, she begged
them: 'O messengers of peace, come
again and yet again!' These tidings
seduced my heart and revived my spirit.

יום בגנה רעו די תדיה עשו,

אמרה: 'הרף גדיך – הדי עוד לא נסו!'

ואמרים לי החליקה לבדי המסו:

'גן מתא נקש, יא חביבי, פאנכר דנאשו

אלגלאלה רכיצה בשחאת הפרמשו.'

But one day when my hands were
grazing in her garden and fondling her
breasts, she said: 'Now take away your
hands – they are not skilful enough.'¹

And her words were so seductive that
they melted my heart: 'Do not touch
me, friend, I do not like those who
hurt me. My breasts are soft and
sensitive. Enough! I shall refuse one
and all!'²

עפרה תכבס

THE LAUNDRESS

עפרה תכבס את בגדיה במי

דמעי ותשטחם לשמש וזהרה:

לא שאלה מי העינות – עם שתי

עיני, ולא שמש – ליפי תארה.

My love washes her clothes in the water
of my tears and spreads them out in the
sun of her beauty. She has no need of
spring-water – she has my two eyes;
nor of the sun – she has her own
radiance.

מה לך, צביה

SONG OF FAREWELL

מה לך, צביה, תמנעי ציריך

מדוד, צלציו מלאו ציריך?

לא תדעי כי אין לדודך מזמן

בלתי שמע קול שלומותיך?

אם הפרידה על שגיניו נגזרה –

עמדי מעט עד אהזה פניך.

לא אדעה אם בין צלעי געצר

לבי, ואם ילך למסעריך.

Why, O fair one, do you withhold your
envoys from the lover whose heart is
filled with pain of you? Do you not
know that Time means nothing to your
beloved, unless he hear your welcoming
voice? If we two are doomed to parting,
stay a while and let me look at your
face. I do not know if my heart has
come to a stop between my ribs, or
else has wandered off with you. Oh,

1. Or, 'they [my breasts] have not yet experienced such things'.

2. The last two lines are in mixed Arabic and Romance. The meaning is uncertain.

חי אהבה, זכרי ימי חשקך כמו
אזכר אני לילות תשוקותיך.
באשר דמותך בחלומי יעבר,
כן אעברה-נא בחלומותיך.
ביני ובינך ים דמעות יהמו
גליו, ולא אוכל עבר אליך.
אך לו פצמיתך לעברו קרבו,
אז נבקעו מימיו לבך רגליך.
לו אחרי מותי באוני יעלה
קול פצמון זהב עלי שוליתך!
או תשאלי לשלום ידיך, משאול
אשאל בדותיך ובשלומיך! [...]

for the life of love, remember the days
of your desire, as I remember the
nights of your passion. And just as your
image moves through my dreams, let
mine move through yours. A sea of
tears roars between us, and I cannot
cross its waves to reach you. But if your
steps approached to cross them, the
waters would divide before your feet.
Oh, after my death, let me still hear the
sound of the golden bells on the hem
of your skirt. And if you then ask how
your beloved is, I, from the grave, will
send you my love and my blessings!

מי יתנני אחיה עד אארה
בשם ומר מבין הליכותיך.
לא אשמעה קולך, אבל אשמע עלי
סתרי לבבי קול צעדותיך. [...]

If only I could live until I gather
myrrh and spices from among your
footprints! I cannot hear your voice,
but in the covert of my heart I hear the
sound of your steps.

בי העב, בי אדוני

THE CRUEL LOVER

בי העב, בי אדוני,
יקר בעינך יגוני,
פן יקרני אסוני.
אט, אט, אט בדמי,
בי רק בךך שלומי!

O my fair youth, my lord, take my grief
to heart, lest disaster overtake me. Oh,
gently, deal gently with my blood, for
my fate is in your hands alone.

לְבִי לְבֵית־אֵל וּלְפָנֵי־אֵל מְאֹד יִהְיֶה
 וּלְמַחְנֵימִים וְכָל פְּגָעֵי טְהוֹרִיךָ.
 שֵׁם הַשְׁכִּינָה שְׁכָנָה לָךְ, וְהַיּוֹצֵר
 פָּתַח לְמוֹל שַׁעְרֵי שַׁחַק שַׁעְרֶיךָ,
 וְכָבוֹד אֱדֹנִי לְבַד הָיָה מְאוֹרֶךְ, וְאֵין
 שֶׁמֶשׁ וְסֶהָר וְכוֹכָבִים מְאִירֶיךָ.
 אֶבְחַר לְגִפְשִׁי לְהַשְׁתַּפֵּךְ בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר
 רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים שְׁפֹכָה עַל בְּחִירֶיךָ.
 אַתָּה בֵּית מְלוּכָה וְאַתָּה כְּסֵא אֱדֹנִי, וְאִם
 יָשָׁבוּ עַבְדִּים עָלַי כְּסֹאוֹת גְּבִירֶיךָ!

מִי יִתְּנֵנִי מְשׁוֹטֵט בְּמָקוֹמוֹת אֲשֶׁר
 נִגְלוּ אֱלֹהִים לַחֲזוֹנֶיךָ וְצִירֶיךָ.
 מִי יַעֲשֶׂה לִי כְנָפִים וְאַרְחִיק נֹדָה,
 אֲנִיד לְבַחֲרֵי לִבִּי בֵּין בְּתֻרֶיךָ.
 אֶפְלָ לְאַפִּי עָלֶי אֶרְצֶךָ וְאַרְצָה אֶבֶר־
 גִּידֶךָ מְאֹד וְאַחֲוֹנֶנּוּ אֶת עַפְרֶיךָ.
 אֶבְכֶּה בְּעַמְדִּי עָלֶי קְבֻרוֹת אֲבוֹתִי וְאֶשׁ־
 תוֹמָם בְּחֻבְרוֹן עָלֶי מִבְחָר קִבְרֶיךָ.
 אֶעֱבֹר בְּיַעְרֶךָ וּבְרִמְלֶיךָ וְאֶעֱמֵד בְּגִל־
 עֲדֶיךָ וְאֶשְׁתַּחֲוֶמָה אֶל הַר עֲבָרֶיךָ –
 הַר הָעֲבָרִים וְהַר הָהָר, אֲשֶׁר שֵׁם שְׁנֵי
 אוֹרִים גְּדוֹלִים, מְאִירֶיךָ וּמְאוֹרֶיךָ.
 חַיֵּי נַשְׁמוֹת – אוֹר אֶרְצֶךָ, וּמִקְר־דְּרוֹר
 אֶבְקֶת עַפְרֶךָ, וְנִפְתַּח צוּף – נְהַרֶיךָ!
 יִנָּעַם לְגִפְשִׁי הֵלֶךְ עָלֶם וְיִחַף עָלֶי
 חֲרָבוֹת שְׁמָמָה אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ דְבִירֶיךָ,

My heart longs for Bethel and Penuel,
 for Mahanaim¹ and for all the shrines
 of your pure ones. There the Shekinah
 dwelled within you, and your Maker
 opened your gates to face the gates of
 heaven. There the glory of the Lord
 was your only light; it was not the sun,
 moon, or stars that shone over you. Oh,
 I would pour out my life in the very
 place where once the spirit of God was
 poured out upon your chosen ones.
 You are the seat of royalty, you are the
 throne of the Lord – though slaves now
 sit upon your princes' thrones!

If only I could roam through those
 places where God was revealed to your
 prophets and heralds! Who will give
 me wings, so that I may wander far
 away? I would carry the pieces of my
 broken heart over your rugged moun-
 tains.² I would bow down, my face on
 your ground; I would love your stones;
 your dust would move me to pity. I
 would weep, as I stood by my ancestors'
 graves, I would grieve, in Hebron, over
 the choicest of burial places!³ I would
 walk in your forests and meadows, stop
 in Gilead, marvel at Mount Abarim;
 Mount Abarim and Mount Hor, where
 the two great luminaries [Moses and
 Aaron] rest, those who guided you and
 gave you light. The air of your land is
 the very life of the soul, the grains of
 your dust are flowing myrrh, your
 rivers are honey from the comb. It
 would delight my heart to walk naked
 and barefoot among the desolate ruins
 where your shrines once stood; where

1. All sites figuring in the life of Jacob.

2. The hills of Bether (Song of Songs 2.17), in the vicinity of Jerusalem.

3. The burial cave of the Patriarchs (Genesis 23.17).

במקום ארוגך אשר נגנז, ובמקום כרוי-
ביך אשר שכנו חדרי חדרים.
אגז ואשליך פאר נזרי ואלב זמן,
חלל בארץ טמאה את גזיריך. [...]

אשרי מחכה ויגיע ויראה עלות
אורך ויבקעו עליו שחרים,
לראות בטובת בחיריך, ולעלז בשמ-
חתך בשובך אלי קדמת געורריך!

ואל ימוט

[...] ואל ימוט בלב ימים לבך
והרים תחזה מטים ומשים,
ומלחים ידיהם במלחים,
וחכמי התרשים מחרישים.
שמחים הולכים לבח פניהם –
ושבים אל אחוריהם ובושים.
ואקינוס לפניה למנוס –
ואין מברח לה כי אם יקושים!
וימוטו וינוטו קלעים,
וינועו ויזועו קרשים,
ויד רוח מצחקת במים,
כנושאי העמרים בדישים,
ופעם תעשה מהם גרנות,
ופעם תעשה מהם גדישים.
בעת התגברם דמו אריות,
ועת החלשם דמו נחשים,

your Ark was hidden away,¹ where your
cherubim once dwelled in the inner-
most chamber. I shall cut off my
glorious hair and throw it away, I shall
curse Time that has defiled your pure
ones in the polluted lands [of exile].

Happy is he who waits and lives to see
your light rising, your dawn breaking
forth over him! He shall see your
chosen people prospering, he shall
rejoice in your joy when you regain the
days of your youth.

THE POET IMAGINES HIS VOYAGE

Let not your heart tremble in the heart
of the sea, when you see mountains
trembling and heaving, and sailors'
hands as limp as rags, and soothsayers
struck dumb. When they set their
course, they were full of joy, but now
they are beaten back in shame. The
whole ocean is yours to escape in, but
your only refuge is the snare of the
deep. The sails quiver and quake, the
beams creak and shudder. The hand of
the wind toys with the waves, like
reapers at the threshing: now it flattens
them out, now it stacks them up. When
the waves gather strength, they are like
lions; when they weaken, they are like

1. According to Talmudic legend,
King Josiah hid the holy Ark from the enemy.

וְרֹאשׁוֹנִים דִּלְקוּם אַחֲרוֹנִים
בְּצַפְעוֹנִים וְאֵין לָהֶם לַחֲשִׁים. [...]

snakes, who then pursue the lions –
like vipers that cannot be charmed.

וְרָגַע יִשְׁתַּקּוּ גָלִים, וְיִדְמוּ
עֲדָרִים עַל פְּנֵי אֶרֶץ גִּטּוּשִׁים.
וְהַלִּיל – כְּבּוֹא שֶׁמֶשׁ בְּמַעְלוֹת
צָבָא מְרוֹם, וְעָלִיו שֶׁר חֲמָשִׁים –
כְּבוֹשִׁית מִשְׁבָּצוֹת זָהָב לְבוּשָׁה,
וְכַתְּכֵלֶת בְּמַלּוּאֹת גְּבִישִׁים.
וְכוֹכָבִים בְּלֵב הַיָּם גְּבוּכִים
כְּגָרִים מִמַּעֲוִיגֵיהֶם גְּרוּשִׁים,
וְכַדְמוּתָם בְּצִלְמָם יַעֲשׂוּ אוֹר
בְּלֵב הַיָּם בְּלִהְיוֹת וְאֲשִׁים.
פְּנֵי מַיִם וְשָׁמַיִם עֲדִיִּים
עָלִי לֵיל מְטַהֲרִים לְטוּשִׁים.
וְיָם דּוֹמָה לְרִקִּיעַ בְּעִינוֹ,
שְׁנֵיהֶם אֶז שְׁנֵי יָמִים חֲבוּשִׁים –
וּבִינוּתָם לְבָבִי יָם שְׁלִישִׁי,
בְּשׂוֹא גָלִי שֶׁבַחִי הַחֲדָשִׁים!

Suddenly, the waves calm down, and
are like flocks spread out over the fields.
And the night – once the sun has gone
down the stairway of the heavenly
hosts, who are commanded by the
moon¹ – is like a Negress dressed in
gold embroidery, or like a violet robe
spangled with crystal. The stars are
astray in the heart of the sea, like
strangers expelled from their homes.
And in the heart of the sea they cast
a light, in their image and likeness,
that glows like fire. Now the sea and
the sky are pure, glittering ornaments
upon the night. The sea is the colour of
the sky – they are two seas bound
together. And between these two, my
heart is a third sea, as the new waves of
my praise surge on high!

זֶה רוּחְךָ, צֵד מַעְרָב

TO THE WESTERN WIND

זֶה רוּחְךָ, צֵד מַעְרָב, רִקְיָם:
הַגִּרְדִּי בְּכִנּוּסָיו וְהַמְּפוּיָם.
מֵאוֹצְרוֹת הָרוּכְלִים מוֹצֵאָךְ,
כִּי אֵינְךָ מֵאוֹצְרוֹת הָרוּחַ!
בְּנִפְי דְּרוֹר תִּגִּיף, וְתִקְרָא לִי דְּרוֹר,
וּבְמַר-דְּרוֹר מִן הַצְּרוֹר לְקוּיָם.

This wind of yours, O West, is all
perfume – it has the scent of spikenard
and apple in its wings. Wind, you come
from the storehouse of spice-merchants,
and not from the common storehouse
of winds. You lift up the swallow's
wings, you set me free, you are like the
purest perfume, fresh from a bunch of

1. Lit. 'commander over unit of fifty'.

מה נִכְסְפוּ לָךְ עַם, אֲשֶׁר בְּגִלְלָךְ
 רָכְבוּ בְּגִבּ הַיָּם עָלֶי גִב לֹוֹחַ!
 אֶל גַּא תִּרְפֶּה יָדְךָ מִן הָאֵגִי,
 כִּי יִחַנֶּה הַיּוֹם וְכִי יָפוּחַ.
 וְרָקַע תִּהְיוּם וְקִרַע לִבֵּב יָמִים, וְנִעַ
 אֶל הַרְרֵי קֹדֶשׁ וְשֵׁם תִּנּוּחַ.
 וְגִצֵּר בְּקָדִים הַמְסַעֵר יָם, עָדִי
 יִשִּׁים לִבֵּב הַיָּם בְּסִיר גְּפוּחַ.

מִה יַעֲשֶׂה אֲסוּר בְּיַד הַצּוּר, אֲשֶׁר
 פָּעַם יִהְיֶה עֲצוּר, וְעַתָּה שְׁלוּחַ?
 אֵךְ סוֹד שְׁאַלְתִּי בְּיַד מָרוֹם — וְהוּא
 יוֹצֵר מָרוֹם הָרִים וּבוֹרֵא רוּחַ!

קִרְאוּ עָלַי בְּנוֹת

קִרְאוּ עָלַי בְּנוֹת וּמִשְׁפָּחוֹת
 שְׁלוֹם, וְעַל אֲחִים וְעַל אָחוֹת,
 מֵאֵת אֲסִיר תִּקְוָה אֲשֶׁר נִקְנָה
 לַיָּם, וְשֵׁם רוּחוֹ בְּיַד רוּחוֹת.
 דַּחֲוִי בְּיַד מַעְרָב לֵיד מִזְרָח,
 זֶה יַעֲבֹר לִנְחוֹת, וְזֶה — לְדַחוֹת.
 בֵּינוּ וּבֵין מָוֶת כְּפֶשַׁע, אֵךְ
 בֵּינוּ וּבֵינוּ מַעְבָּה לִוְחוֹת.
 קְבוּר בְּתִיּוֹ בְּאֶרֶץ עֵץ — לֹא
 קִרְקַע, וְלֹא אֶרֶבֶע, וְלֹא פָחוֹת!
 יוֹשֵׁב — וְאֵין לַעֲמֹד עָלַי רִגְלִיו,
 שׁוֹכֵב — וְאֵין רִגְלִיו מִשְׁלָחוֹת,
 חוֹלָה וְיָרָא מִפְּנֵי גוֹיִים,

myrrh. Everyone here longs for you; by
 your good graces, they ride over the sea
 upon a mere plank. Oh, do not abandon
 the ship, when the day draws to its end
 or when it begins. Smooth out the
 ocean, break a path through the sea
 until you reach the holy mountains, and
 there subside. Rebuke the east wind
 that whips up the sea and turns it into
 a boiling cauldron.

But how can the wind help, for it is a
 prisoner of the Rock — sometimes held
 back and sometimes let loose? Only
 God can grant my deepest wish: for He
 is the maker of high mountains and
 the creator of winds!

SONG AT SEA

Greetings to the kinsfolk, to brothers
 and sisters, from this prisoner of hope
 who was ransomed by the sea and
 committed his spirit into the hands of
 the winds. Now they push him back
 and forth: the west wind guides his
 ship, while the east wind thrusts it
 back. Between him and death there is
 nothing but a step; between them only
 the thickness of the planks. He is
 buried alive in a wooden coffin, but
 without any earth: not even four cubits,¹
 not even a handful. He sits, for there
 is no room for him to stand; he lies
 down, and he cannot stretch out his
 legs. He is ill, he is afraid of the

1. The minimum required for a grave.

גם מפני לסטים ומרוחות.
 חובל ומלח, כל בני פרסח,
 הם הסגנים שם והפחות.
 לא לתקמים שם וגם לא חן
 לידעים — רק יודעים לשחות!
 יתעצבו רגע לזאת פני —
 איך יעלו הלב והטוחות —
 עד אשפכה נפשי בתיק האל,
 נכח מקום ארון ומזבחות.
 אגמל לאל, גומל לתיקים
 טובות, בטוב שירות ותשבחות.

הבא מבול

הבא מבול ושם תכל חרבה?
 ואין לראות פני ארץ חרבה,
 ואין אדם ואין חיה ואין עוף —
 הסף הכל ושקבו מעצבה?
 ובראות הר ושוטה לי מנוחה,
 וארץ הערבה לי ערבה.
 ואשגית לכל עבר — ואין כל,
 אבל מים ושמים ותבה,
 וליתן בהרתיחו מצולה,
 ואחשב כי תהום יחשב לשיבה.
 ולב הים יבחש באניה,
 כאלו היא ביד הים גנבה!
 וים יזעף — ונפשי תעלז, כי
 אלי מקדש אלהיה קרבה.

Gentile passengers, as well as of pirates and ghosts. The helmsman and the sailors — all of them ruffraff — are the viceroys and governors here! Honour does not belong to the wise nor success to the skilful — only to those who know how to swim! Because of this my face is downcast — how could my heart rejoice? — but only for a moment: until I come to pour out my soul in the bosom of God, at the site of the Ark and the Altar. Then I shall render to God, who renders favours to the undeserving,¹ my choicest songs and praises.

ON THE HIGH SEAS

Has a flood come and laid the world waste? For dry land is nowhere to be seen. There is neither man, nor beast, nor bird. Have they all perished, all lain down in torment and died? If only I could see a hill or valley, I would be comforted; even a desert would delight me. I look in every direction, and there is nothing but sea and sky and ship,² and leviathan churning the deep, until it seems that the abyss is white with age! Deceitfully, the sea covers the ship, as though it had taken it by theft. The sea is in turmoil, but my soul is full of joy, for she is drawing near to the temple of her God.

1. An allusion to the Benediction on Deliverance, recited by those who come safely through danger.

2. The word here is the one used for Noah's ark.